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A NEGLECTED MYSTERY

IT is the habit of modern writers—doubtless the habit of writers ever since the first scribe poked his stylus into a soft, clay tablet—to endeavor to instruct in matters with which they are themselves familiar. A man usually likes to write or talk about the things he thinks he can explain. Hence there are almost endless books on science for the laymen, retailing with amazing ingenuity the relatively complex theories which are available from modern specialists. A large bookstore, for example, may stock as many as half a dozen books devoted to the workings of heredity, all of them giving extensive information on inheritable traits, but withholding discussion of matters which, so far, our knowledge of heredity does not help us to understand. Perhaps a book on the *gaps* in scientific knowledge would not be interesting; perhaps it would not "sell," although the books of Charles Fort (*The Book of the Damned*, *Lo!* and *New Lands*) found enough buyers to justify republication years after their first appearance, and Fort's books were largely devoted to matters which modern science ignores. Fort, however, was a man who could make fascinating entertainment out of "the unknown," and he provided enough facts to stimulate the imagination of the reader—in fact, he stimulated so many imaginations that his admirers eventually started the Fortean Society to continue the tradition of turning up odd, "damned" facts.

But Fort was a kind of "sport" in the field of literary science. He made a profession out of the exceptional and apparently inexplicable (although he offered explanations of his own), and conventionally minded scientists hardly take him seriously. What we have in mind is better illustrated by a comment of Prof. Ross G. Harrison (Yale) on the science of genetics:

... the whole development of the gene theory is one of the most spectacular and amazing achievements of biology in our times; the embryologist, however, is concerned more with the larger changes in the whole organism and its primitive system of organs than with the lesser qualities known to be associated with genic action... he is interested more in the back than in the bristles on the back and more in eyes than in eye color... Already we have theories that refer the processes of development to genic action and regard the whole performance as no more than the realization of the potencies of the genes. Such theories are altogether too one-sided. (*Science*, April 16, 1937.)

As noted recently in these pages, Dr. Ethel Harvey of Princeton was able to develop a sea urchin embryo to the blastula stage from an egg which had no nucleus—no chromosomes or genes at all!—indicating, to the lay reader, a rather exciting situation in contrast to the claims made for the importance of the genes. Yet we have heard of no interest in Dr. Harvey's discovery, nor any serious discussion of the problem raised by Dr. Harrison—while books on the working of Mendel's laws through the genes keep on appearing. A man could get quite puffed up with "knowledge" from the endless reading-matter that is available on this and similar subjects—he might even get to suppose that the only important directions of inquiry are those mapped out for him by popular science writers.

The psychiatric books—now being published in even greater quantity—have similar defects, although, to be just, it ought to be admitted that the psychiatrists are trying to wear away a number of popular misconceptions about human behavior, and deserve ample encouragement for this reason. But the psychiatrists are also interested in what *they* know about, and not so much concerned with matters on which their theories have little or nothing to say. For example, the psychiatrists tell us at great length about the harm that may be done by people to other people, and by people to themselves through unthinking acceptance of dogmatic religious ideas about guilt and sinfulness. There is a lot to be said on this subject, and, so far as we can see, the psychiatrists are saying it remarkably well. But there are other things of importance about human beings on which psychiatry or psychoanalysis is relatively silent.

After all the influences of "conditioning" are accounted for—theoretically, at least—and we have untied the complexes and adjusted the neuroses, there will still remain in human beings differing qualities, traits or characteristics that seem to be "original," and are therefore without any "scientific" explanation at all. For example—and this, we think, is a particularly important example—there is the striking contrast between naturally imitative and naturally creative people. "Creative," of course, is one of the over-worked clichés of the modern vocabulary, but it does stand for the sort of mind which refuses to

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—"To be a slave of old traditions is as great a folly as to be a slave of new quackeries," wrote a nineteenth century historian (W. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, 1875). This axiom may be said to have guided broadly the deliberations of the English Parliament since the first express claim for liberty of speech was made in the House of Commons in 1455. True, it has not prevented bad legislation from being passed or good laws from being obstructed; but it does explain the persistence of parliamentary traditions of fair and free debate and of continuous adaptation to modern needs.

Thus, some months before the recent election, a member sponsored the Fraudulent Mediums Bill, seeking to repeal the Witchcraft Act, 1735 (which abolished punishment of witchcraft by death), amend parts of the Vagrancy Act of 1824, and make provision for the penalizing of persons who fraudulently purport to act as spiritualistic mediums. The Bill for repeal was supported by members of differing religions who ask that there shall be no restriction on the right of every person (including Spiritualists) to enjoy freedom of religion.

The Witchcraft Act of 1735 was aimed at impostors, but it caught in its net impostors and innocent alike. In conjunction with the Vagrancy Act of 1824, no medium against whom proceedings were taken had any reasonable chance of escaping conviction. Both Acts were harsh and

move in well-worn grooves. The imitative mind, on the other hand, feels uncomfortable anywhere else.

Reading a Dorothy Parker story will no doubt help to illustrate what we have in mind, but the comparison is familiar enough to be known to all. There are those who quite literally cannot converse except in the stereotyped phrases of the hour. This speech is a sort of sub-basic English which is made up not of words but of capsule sentiments and slogan-like confirming exclamations. Everyone knows how quickly the verbal trademarks of radio and television performers spread across the country. Apparently, the addicts of this form of entertainment take ingenuous pride in repeating what they hear, in finding places in their conversation to work in the latest radio "gag."

It probably ought to be noted that very few humans are completely free of this tendency, which is a weakness only when it is a substitute for thought. Reverting to the psycho-analytical vocabulary for the moment, it probably represents some kind of hunger for security, some deep-felt wish to "belong" to the group which "knows what is going on" and is able to reduce a large part of human experience to familiar formulas by using convenient labels of scorn, ridicule, or approbation. All of us have to cope with life, and to do one's coping with the speech of a highly paid radio actor may seem to some to be a mark of distinction.

There are others, however, whose natural tendency is

(Turn to page 7)

inimical to Spiritualism, which has a thousand churches and many thousands of adherents in this country.

In the debate, it was pointed out that there were members of the House of Commons holding prominent positions who believed that Spiritualism could demonstrate the reality of the after-death life but who were not anxious to associate themselves publicly with Spiritualists because of the odium placed upon them by the operation of ancient Acts. One member remarked that it has taken 215 years for the House to realize that what has been called "extra-sensory perception" is a reality. Another member supported the Bill because he regarded it as part of the process of religious emancipation begun in the nineteenth century. Another disclosed the fact that his great-grandfather was a Romany gipsy, and that his grandmother used to practise the art of clairvoyance.

Anything that will make for freedom of religion is bound to meet with the support of enlightened minds. The removal of ancient legal penalties from the exercise of genuine Spiritualism falls within this category, although the history of Spiritualism shows that this movement is not free from the virus of intolerance and social persecution. There is the further question of the dangers to mediums arising from the practice of what can become unconscious sorcery; but that matter, like the kindred perils associated with hypnotism, must await further education and reform in philosophy and morals.

What is interesting, however, from a legislative standpoint, is that the Blasphemy laws, which were considered a dead letter though unrepealed, can still be invoked in the persecution of offenders. There have been three legal weapons for coercing those who attacked Christianity: (1) the Ecclesiastical Courts, (2) the Common Law, and (3) a Statute of 1698, which enacts that if any person educated in the Christian religion "shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian religion to be true, or shall deny the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority," and is convicted, he shall for the first offence be adjudged incapable to hold any public offices or employments, and on the second shall lose his civil rights and be imprisoned for three years.

Most trials for blasphemy in the past 200 years (since 1911 half a dozen persons have been imprisoned for this offence) fall under the common law procedure as interpreted by a Lord Chief Justice in 1676, when a man was charged with having said that religion was a cheat. It was then held that to speak against Christianity is to speak in subversion of the law, since Christianity is "parcel of the laws of England." Even today it is unthinkable for anyone to speak over the radio network in support of secularism, as such, though men like Bertrand Russell are invited to talk on subjects of a philosophical nature.

Whilst welcoming, therefore, the extension of religious toleration in the case of the Spiritualists, it is clear that much remains to be done before the distinction between essential religion and human dogmas of every kind is held to be implicit in our social polity.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT



DOUGLAS IN ASIA

STRANGE LANDS AND FRIENDLY PEOPLE, the thoughtful Asian travelogue of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, would have to be considered a welcome and informative book under any circumstances; we can be additionally glad that it will receive wide reading as the Book-of-the-Month selection for November.

Accompanied by his young son, Justice Douglas has made two trips through the Middle East and into Asia proper, one in 1949 and the second in 1950. Travelling without portfolio, and also with about as complete an absence of political bias as a man may develop, he first touched the Mediterranean, progressed through the major centers of the Moslem world, and thence to India.

Every tribal and national group he met impressed the Justice with the unique gifts and perspectives of its people. Although he would have found it easy enough for a man of his eminence to spend most of his time with the leading statesmen of the Middle East and the Asian countries, he concentrated on informal visits among "the tribesmen, farmers, goatherds, villagers, woodcutters, shopkeepers who constitute the hard central core of each of these countries." Americans, in the opinion of Justice Douglas, can learn a great deal from these "foreign" cultures. And a reader of *Strange Lands and Friendly People*, even if not able to duplicate Douglas' adventures, may benefit from comparisons suggested, even if they are not always favorable to the "in-America-everything-is-better-than-anywhere-else" notion. For instance, those who have seen George Steven's capable film version of Dreiser's *American Tragedy* ("A Place in the Sun"), may reflect that Dreiser's original title is particularly apt—this "tragedy" could hardly have occurred in Persia, nor in most of the East, due to differences in social attitudes which are far from being to America's credit.

If Justice Douglas singles out India for special sympathy and attention, this seems less a mark of favoritism or personal fascination than of conclusions based upon the unique role India is currently playing in the political and cultural destiny of the world. Since his observations on India are among the most valuable in the book, it is well to reproduce some passages from this section. The following was crystallized for him by a discussion in Nehru's home with an Indian official who began by pointing to the obvious fact of a world divided into two major political allegiances. Douglas quotes the official on American criticism of Nehru for "playing Russia's game":

But India's position, he went on to say, like that of the ancient kingdom of Judah, is not one of neutrality in the insipid sense in which we use the word today. India by instinct, by tradition, by religion is opposed to totalitarianism; but India does not want to become either a staging ground for American military defense against Russia or a

Russian base. The teaching of Gandhi on non-violence is a powerful force in India. That doctrine does not mean a passive submission to terror and aggression, but is based on the principle that the human spirit is more powerful than tanks and aircraft. It proposes nonviolence as an affirmative force. As Nehru put it, the doctrine of nonviolence is "an active and positive instrument for the peaceful solution of international differences."

This is a matter of deep conviction among leaders of Indian thought.

Douglas' own opinions on the relationship between Indian policy and Communist political offensives are similar to Nehru's, for whom he has great respect. Douglas attempts to explain to Americans how much in error they allow themselves to be when they identify Nehru's socialist leanings with Communist sympathies:

India, in its treatment of Communists, is following the teaching of Gandhi engraved on the walls of the government radio station at New Delhi: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them."

The chief cause of Western criticism of Nehru's foreign policy has been, of course, India's great friendliness toward and sympathy for Communist China:

Nehru's answer to me gave insight which those who have never visited Asia usually lack.

"China is at last tackling her basic economic problems. The Communist government is honest. It is on the side of the common people. It is taking measures against the ownership of land by the few. It is for mass education, public health, rural reconstruction. The Chinese peasant at last has a champion."

Such political projects in Asia are inspiring to Asians, whoever undertakes them. Asia has been under despots for untold centuries. Asians have been exploited beyond the imagination of most Americans. The day of liberation is a notable day in Asian annals whatever the political creed of the liberator. That was the spirit behind Nehru's leadership of the Asian Conference in 1949 that came to the aid of Indonesia.

My discussion with Nehru turned to Russian aggression, its plan to subject the world to communism, and the place of China in the Russian orbit of influence. The answer was both honest and genuinely Asian. In Asia, China is more Asian than Russia is. There is an Asian consciousness that ties India, China, and all the other colored races of that continent close together. Russia, as well as England and the United States, is excluded.

Heresy? If so, this is heresy from a man who was persistently attacked by the Soviet Press throughout his Far Eastern wanderings. Douglas was called a "devil," a "gun runner," and even—which hurt the Justice's feelings the most—a "decrepit mountaineer." Is Douglas mistaken in this evaluation of Chinese Communism in comparison with that of the Soviet? He may indeed be partially or altogether so, but even if he is, he obviously cannot have arrived at such erroneous conclusions through

(Turn to page 4)



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TRIBUTE TO THE NATION

It is obviously more than coincidence that the *Nation*, the periodical which, so far as we know, did the best job of critical commentary on *Collier's* "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," is also the periodical which has been banned for more than two years from the school libraries of New York City on the ground that its articles have been offensive to Catholic readers.

What is it to be "offensive," anyway? The war "preview" seems to us about as offensive as a magazine can get, but no one—not even *Collier's* sternest critics—has been heard to suggest that the magazine be kept out of the hands of the young. Yet what could be worse reading for children and young people? Here are 60,000 words of anticipation of the most terrible war in history—*Collier's* makes it last eight years—written by men with rhetorical power, specialized knowledge, and the capacity to give their words the feeling of terrible reality. On top of all this is a dreamy, pie-in-the-sky version of universal peace and democracy after the war.

Could anything be more misleading to the young? And yet the *Nation*, in which an intelligent scholar and political scientist exposes this delusion, is barred from the public schools. By a parity of reasoning, the New York Board of Education which voted to ban the *Nation* ought itself to be barred from the public schools—except that this sort of "parity of reasoning" is itself a delusion, the kind of delusion that makes wars increase and multiply.

The *Nation* is disliked in other quarters. We have no doubt that *Nation* readers are regarded as bad "security risks" by those who ferret out suspicious characters for the House Committee on Un-American Activities. There are probably many who would prefer not to be caught with a copy of the *Nation* lying around the house. Not that anything is really *wrong* with it, but you know how people are.

The *Nation*, according to the current ABC report, has 109,000 subscribers. These 109,000 people, it seems to us, represent an important remaining support for one kind of political sanity in the United States. It seems fair to say that if the *Nation* had *Collier's* three million subscribers, the chances of world peace would be vastly increased. And we say this without implying any sort of agreement with some of the things the *Nation* sometimes stands for.

REVIEW—(Continued)

the dictates of self-interest. Rather we should argue that here is another man who strives to preserve "the philosophic temper" in the interest of truth and justice.

Douglas does not, in any sense, soft-pedal the persistence and aggressiveness of Soviet Communism. He has seen the effects of Communist infiltration through political parties, sampled their propagandizing and trouble-fomenting in almost every one of the Middle East lands. But he tells us also that a cooperative economy seems very natural to most of these peoples, including the Israelites. The following description is typical of what Douglas found to be the case in the many progressive centers of the Eastern world:

Israel's attitude is experimental, not dogmatic. One can be as passionate for private capitalism as he chooses, or he can espouse and practice a socialist philosophy more extreme in some respects than even Soviet Russia's. Israel's tolerance is indeed one of its most impressive qualities. The Soviets thrust their dogma down the throats of all men. Israel leaves the choice to the individual; no creed is forced on anyone. And in Israel, unlike Soviet Russia and most Middle East countries, one finds the finest traditions of civil liberties as we know them in the Anglo-American world.

In summarizing his conclusions, Justice Douglas embodies an unequivocal warning. Americans must, he writes, build an understanding fraternity with the liberal and progressive elements of each Asian land. This cannot be done by dollars nor by guns, nor can it be done in a hurry. It cannot be done so long as we continue to judge people "by their *standard of living* and to consider 'backward' all who do not know our conveniences, such as plumbing, refrigerators, window screens, and electricity. Those are false yardsticks." He continues:

We must, in other words, go to the East with warmth and understanding. The rewards will be bitter if we continue to go the other way. It is clear to one who travels the villages of Asia that if we continue to play the role we have played in the last five years, these people will become united in one great crusade—a crusade against America. Nothing would be more needless, nothing more tragic. Yet the anti-American attitude in Asia continues to mount—for to Asians America is too powerful to cooperate with them and too rich to understand them.

MANAS is a journal of independent inquiry, concerned with study of the principles which move world society on its present course, and with search for contrasting principles—that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism under the conditions of life in the twentieth century. MANAS is concerned, therefore, with philosophy and with practical psychology, in as direct and simple a manner as its editors and contributors can write. The word "MANAS" comes from a common root suggesting "man" or "the thinker." Editorial articles are unsigned, since MANAS wishes to present ideas and viewpoints, not personalities.

The Publishers

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

Modern psychologists often speak out fervently against the practice of trying to frighten children away from things that may harm them, if there is any chance that as a result the young ones will develop and dwell upon some rather horrible mental image. But what about a parent who feels that the child should be told something of the existence of psychopathic sex criminals that may, and sometimes do, attack small children? Here we run the greatest risk of creating a "horror" image in the child's mind, but may also feel we have no right to withhold warnings.

ONE fact to be faced in a problem of this sort is that the mental pictures children will form derive in large part from parental conceptions. Certainly, if a parent has a veritable phobia on sex-fiends, and many unfortunately do, the possibility of passing on the phobia to a sensitive child is very great indeed. The discerning parent, however, can determine never to let surges of protective emotion overbalance his primary obligation as an educator. If we are in the least degree preoccupied with the dangers that may threaten our children, the *nature* of our introduction to any subject which involves the need for warning will reveal that preoccupation. We shall be doing what countless generations of religious fanatics have done, especially in centuries past—focussing attention upon Evil. The wrong sort of psychological impression can be given, moreover, even without any dwelling upon details, being sometimes conveyed by the demeanor or attitude of the parent when telling a small daughter never to accept car rides from strange men.

There is considerable rational capacity in even the youngest children, and whether or not a three-year-old is able to debate questions according to the canons of formal logic is no criterion for judging the child's appreciation of a balanced, measured handling of any issue. If the true life of the human being is the life of mind, it is certainly reasonable to suppose that *something* of mental life is present even in the cradle, and that the child will benefit enormously from all attempts of parents to use rational methods of persuasion. To make a specific suggestion to the questioner, then, we would say that telling children not to accompany "strange men" should be followed with some easy, rather matter of fact explanation. For instance, could it not be suggested that those who have no little girls of their own, sometimes, in rare cases, act very peculiarly, because something has been left out of their lives and their happiness. Further, that people sometimes become sick in their minds in the same way they become sick in their bodies; they sometimes become so sick they harm people without actually knowing what they are doing. If such people do not know anything about little girls they may try to *make* someone they don't even know love them as a child of their own might have done. Such situations, it can be seen are very unpleasant and even dangerous for a little girl, since a man like this may not let the little girl go when she wants to.

Such an attempt might give a child a feeling of understanding sufficient to put her on her guard, while not

focussing attention upon the horrible potentialities of sex crimes. We think, by the way, that this is actually the same problem as that encountered at the time of adolescence, when we may expect to find ourselves wanting to warn children against certain types of approach from those of the opposite sex. The advisability of avoiding any contact with those whose behavior is peculiar, crude, or strained, is fully rational, explainable to the child in terms of her own self-interest. Adolescents who have been nagged in vague terms about the evils of sex, however, and put through suspicious cross-examinations after "dates," are obviously being encouraged to develop unnatural sex preoccupations of their own.

A lot has been said, both in this column and by child psychologists, on the advisability of waiting for a fitting or natural moment for discussion of problems of this nature. But the "natural moment" in all such cases really turns on whether or not spontaneous trust in this sort of counsel has been developed. We do not have to wait until the child reads about a sex crime in the newspapers to launch such a conversation, and our warnings may be geared to the natural level and extent of the child's understanding. The detailed behavior of "sex-fiends" will not be illuminating to the child, rather completely beyond the child's understanding, and it is doubtful whether such details attached to a warning will help; more likely, they will plague the child with a sense of horror.

We might also regard the occasion of a parent's giving warning along these lines as a very profound opportunity. The dominant tendency of the parental world is still to separate people into "bad" people and "good" people, whereas a more sane and helpful perspective emphasizes *degrees* of mental balance or unbalance, and widely differing degrees of emotional maturity. Many well-known psychoses are but aggravated fears, and connected with most of our abnormal fears will be found distrust and suspicion of other human beings. The psychiatrist who makes clinical use of the word psychosis is fully aware of this, and conveys something of the impartial clinical view in dealing with immature or unbalanced patients.

According to this canon, we are not called on to pat "sex fiends" on the head and show them active personal regard, but we are required to adopt that broad sympathy of understanding which places no human being, however depraved, beyond the limits of our compassion and concern. Here, actually, the psychiatrists are hearkening back to the sage counsel of the world's greatest religious teachers. Both the Christ and the Buddha accepted every sort of human creature in their vision of universal brotherhood, of which Jesus' "consorting with publicans and sinners" may be a symbolic reminder. Loathing for any sort of human being is itself an ingredient of psychosis, and one of the greatest and most lasting services we can indirectly perform for our children is to rid ourselves utterly of such a cast of mind. Those of the young who grow up in a home background of suspicious fears lay themselves open to contracting neuroticisms in their own later social and personal lives; they also become susceptible to fanatical demagogues, who invariably make use of the twin powers of fear and hate for some destructive, "revolutionary" purpose.



FRONTIERS

RELIGION

SCIENCE

EDUCATION

The Shadow and the Substance

COMING events, the saying goes, cast their shadow before. The imagined "shadow" of one supposed coming event was so realistically portrayed in *Collier's* recently that we found it extremely painful reading, and put down the issue only half finished. We speak, of course, of the Oct. 27 *Collier's*, entirely devoted to how the United States defeated the Russians in the war which began in May of 1952.

The *Collier's* editors probably got the idea for this coup from John Hersey's *New Yorker* story of what happened when the bomb struck Hiroshima. People still talk about this unusual editorial achievement, but we hope that nobody will talk about the *Collier's* story on next year's atom bombings, except to disown it as an expression of American public opinion. The surprising and ominous thing about the *Collier's* "World War III" is that its detailed description is the work of thirty-four "celebrated authors" who should know better. Among the contributors are such writers as Robert E. Sherwood, Arthur Koestler, Hanson Baldwin, J. B. Priestley, Allan Nevins, Stuart Chase, and other well-known specialists and literary figures.

We weren't going to mention this issue of *Collier's* at all, but Prof. O. F. Fleming has done such a good job of analysis and evaluation of its contents that it seems important to call the attention of MANAS readers to his article, "Collier's Wins World War III," in the *Nation* for Nov. 10. Mr. Fleming teaches political science at Vanderbilt University. What he has to say suggests that if political science professors could be elected to office, there might be some hope of politics becoming a science. On the subject of the *Collier's* contributors, he writes:

Collier's could have easily assembled a galaxy of radio commentators, columnists, and others who have for years been steadily preparing the American people for war with Russia. Yet with the exception of Walter Winchell, this group is not represented. Instead, the table of contents shows a long list of people of moderate views, of progressive, non-belligerent instincts, people who have not joined in sounding the war drums. As one reads, one wonders how each author came to take part in this enterprise, and whether any of them really understood what the impact of the whole would be. If many of them did, then it is much later than we thought.

The worst thing about this tabloid version of war and victory is its picture of what will happen afterward: "life," says Mr. Fleming, in his summary of the *Collier's* forecast, "will go on as before in a free world of our own making, really organized this time by us." This is the theory of "one more war" to clean up the mistakes of the last one. The last war wasn't quite big enough to fix everything right. Only a *total* world war in which we

are the victors will enable us to set everything *totally* right.

The *Collier's* contributors exhibit an appalling lack of understanding of what will make a free, peaceful, and democratic world possible. As Mr. Fleming points out:

In 1945, as on a smaller scale in 1918, the engines of war had blasted the old order to bits and it could not be put back together again. The result in Europe has been suggested—loss of empire, direction, and purpose; nearly half the world turned Socialist or Communist. We cannot annihilate homes, livelihoods, and capital goods—the very lifeblood of capitalism—without smashing the old way of life. It is tempting to think that just one more epoch of bombing would really settle everything. Quite probably it would, but would the settlement be what we anticipate? Would not the forces loosed in the other two wars grind through to their final conclusion?

The *Collier's* writers also ignore the less massive but equally destructive effects of another war on civilian populations. These effects need not be "imagined," for they are already here, in large degree, as the result of previous wars. *U.S. News and World Report* for Nov. 16 presents a survey of the current rise of dishonesty in the United States which entirely justifies the writer's final conclusion: "... the evidence points to a widespread weakening of the American moral fiber. The moral decay that has appeared at the top, in parts of Government, seems to be just as noticeable throughout the nation."

In Philadelphia, for example, a group of banks which formerly intercepted from three to five worthless checks a day now stops about 80. Forgery, according to the American Bankers Association, is costing double the losses of 1942. Since 1945, counterfeiting of U.S. currency has increased about 2,000 per cent. Embezzlement in banks has gone up nearly nine per cent since last year. The FBI handled twice as many embezzlement cases in 1950 as it did in 1946. Shoplifting has become a major plague to retail stores. One variety store chain claims that losses through pilfering total between 2.5 and 3 per cent of sales; in New York City, the number of persons caught shoplifting is 30 per cent larger than in 1940. Fraudulent claims have increased insurance rates and bonding companies are covering greater losses incurred through dishonest employees. While the population has grown only 14.3 per cent since 1940, major crimes are up 18 per cent in this period. Auto thefts, down for a while after the war, are now increasing again. Of all these tendencies, the *U.S. News* writer remarks:

From one end of the country to the other, . . . there are signs that moral attitudes are becoming warped, that ethical standards no longer are what they were.

A letdown from war, the effects of inflation and heavy spending, a what's-the-use feeling among young people who see little ahead but uncertainty and military service,

A NEGLECTED MYSTERY

(Continued)

in an exactly opposite direction. The "security" of such persons arises from the feeling of integrity which results when their speech is an entirely deliberate and individual expression. They have triggers set in their minds to prevent the thoughtless repetition of stereotyped expressions. They feel that their humanness—which is, after all, the capacity of man to think and speak for himself—is somehow reduced by using these merely echoing forms of speech.

Actually, this question of imitation versus originality involves the whole process of inner, psychological "growing up," or maturation of character—a process, incidentally, which in many cases seems to have only a superficial relationship to one's age in years. Children, even, may exhibit more of this kind of maturity than many adults. There are children who, without being either assertive or particularly self-conscious about it, begin living their own mental lives at a very early age. When they

all seem to contribute. Search is on for a good time, for an easy way to pick up a dollar. Everywhere are indications that people are adopting the idea that "the other fellow is getting his—why shouldn't I?"

These are the facts which both the campaigners for religion in the schools and the champions of "peacetime" conscription for military training view with alarm, but neither of these clamors for more regimentation can hide the truth, which is that the *individual* sense of moral responsibility is undergoing eclipse—a development which usually occurs when there has been too much organization and outside control of human behavior. Another war would surely press us over the cliff of moral breakdown.

The practical wisdom of Prof. Fleming's final remarks is too searching to omit:

The few hundreds of men who are, in the main, forming our attitude toward another world war should not assume that democracy and capitalism will survive on this continent, a bit bruised but permanently safeguarded. The contrary assumption is the "realistic" one. The advancing tide of witch-hunting, character assassination, purges, and thought control in the United States would rapidly submerge all our freedom if we went to war with Russia. A war which became, however it was begun, an effort to exterminate world communism would bring a fascist dictatorship in the United States strong enough to suppress every vestige of dissent in the Western nations and to obtain the endless levies of men and resources we should require to control a ruined and barbarized world.

In our time the business of fighting world wars, whether nationalistic or ideological, is played out. Never again can any victory be won which will promote the values we are most concerned about. These values, whether inherent in private enterprise or in civil liberties, can be conserved only by exerting ourselves mightily to prevent a third world war.

Another world war is neither inevitable nor necessary, but unless many powerful voices are raised in this country in favor of moderation and restraint we are headed straight toward a "war of liberation" "for unlimited and unattainable objectives," to quote the remarkably wise and pungent letter of William R. Matthews, publisher of the *Arizona Daily Star*, in the *New York Times* for October 31. He warned that "we are being shouted into a catastrophic war by the opinion makers of this country." The bell does not toll alone for the men in the Kremlin. It tolls for all of us.

make up a sentence, it is a reflection of their own individual thinking, and because of this commands a special sort of attention from adult hearers. This, indeed, is the universal characteristic of all acts which result from reflection and deliberation, whether by children or grown-ups. Speech or behavior which is merely the offprint of contemporary fads, or is so typically an impulsive reaction as to be entirely predictable on a statistical basis, cannot be regarded in the same way as that which is literally "born" from the values and judgment of an individual. We do not *feel* the intellectual and moral strength of the individual in mere reflex responses. Instead, without really analyzing it, we recognize that what is said or done is simply a single facet of a *mass* reaction—it has no genuine intellectual significance, save as evidence of the processes of mass psychology and the lack of individuality in the one who acts or speaks in this way.

Of course, the problem is far more complex than this discussion can indicate. In the first place, a man may have certain, personal knowledge in some directions, and speak as a genuine individual so long as he remains on familiar ground. But the same man may easily lapse into uncritical "mass" attitudes when drawn to a consideration of matters where maturity is lacking. Our characters, in short, are often asymmetrically developed, with the result that we may be hard and brilliant in some relationships, and weakly absorbent, like sponges, in others.

The *principle* of originality, however, when it is part of a person's makeup, operates in a broader fashion. The man in whom this principle is active tends to be reticent on subjects where he feels his knowledge is inadequate, and this reticence itself becomes a source of strength for him. Inasmuch as particular knowledge or information is infinite in extent, it follows that a man's attitude toward what he knows and doesn't know is far more important than the measurable store of information which he possesses.

The habit, however, of accepting the expressions of others, and of wondering what others will think of what we do (out of timidity, rather than for better reasons), seems closely related to the emotionally unified behavior of crowds and mobs. It is this, probably, which creates the strong cultural differentiations of nation and race, giving these mass groupings of human beings a more concrete identity than the individuals who make them up. Here, perhaps, we may also find an important cause of the interminable wars of our time (and of collective guilt, which was discussed in Review last week).

A man who fears to think for himself, who suffers from insecurity the moment he is thrust out upon his own, is only potentially an individual human being. He can echo the vocabulary of individual moral responsibility, but he recognizes it only in terms of the popularly accepted norms of mass behavior, when it is in fact no longer individual moral responsibility, but only custom—or, as the sociologists would put it, "*mores*." For him, obedience to custom *is* morality, and this, we may note, affords a practical explanation of the obvious sincerity of some of those currently engaged in the witch-hunting of so-called "radicals." The real offense of the radical is not his supposedly "communist" notions, but his deviation from the

norms of mass behavior. He seems to attack the ideas in which imitative minds have found their greatest security. That is why, as George Hartmann showed years ago, it is possible to speak of the "feeling-tone" of words.

The survey of political opinion conducted some fifteen years ago by Dr. Hartmann among the people of a county in Pennsylvania obtained results which are extremely revealing. He formulated twenty statements, ten of them radical and ten conservative in tone. Here are four of the questions, two from each list:

The development of the highest welfare of the country will require government ownership of important minerals.

Our educational forces should be directed toward a more thoroughly socialistic order of society.

Licenses to teach in the public schools should be refused to believers in socialism.

The history of protective tariff legislation is a worthy record of our government's impartial and efficient devotion to the welfare of all of the people.

The results of the survey showed that while 55.5 per cent of those interviewed favored collectivist proposals or programs, the most popular party designation was "Republican," with "Communist" at the bottom of the list. The explanation of this curious contradiction lay in the fact that in some of the statements submitted for judgment, political theories or proposals were described, but not identified with any party. Waldemar Kaempffert, science editor of the *New York Times*, made this summary of the over-all results of Dr. Hartmann's somewhat startling experiment:

An analysis of the table of beliefs is a revelation of human inconsistency. Ninety per cent of the radically minded thought well of a protective tariff. Of those who would refuse teaching licenses to believers in socialism, 65 per cent endorsed socialistic proposals. Stranger still, the extreme anti-Socialists were more liberal or socialistic than the professed Socialists in responding to such propositions as "the reward of manual labor as compared with the share taken by employers has been in just proportion to the services rendered" or "the power of huge fortunes in this country endangers democracy."

Manifestly, the term "Republican" had acquired a "good" feeling-tone in Pennsylvania, while "Socialist" was definitely on the unpopular side. Yet, wisely or unwisely, many of the would-be "Republicans" liked the substance of socialist ideas!

Facts about human nature such as these mean one thing to the politician, and quite another thing to the reformer or educator. To the statesman and political philosopher, they mean what Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said in an opinion handed down in 1923:

Democracy . . . substitutes self-restraint for external restraint. . . . It demands continuous sacrifice by the individual and more exigent obedience to the moral law than any other form of government. Success in a democratic

undertaking must proceed from the individual. It is possible only when the process of perfecting the individual is pursued.

The problem of the educator is to learn how to pursue "the process of perfecting the individual"—a difficult one at best, as Socrates makes plain in the *Apology*. The problem of the statesman or the maker of constitutions is to discover some means of placing the most "perfect" individuals in authority, and keeping them there, while at the same time establishing the necessary safeguards against tyranny and the misuse of power. Manifestly, the statesman cannot accomplish very much unless the educator's work has preceded him and been successful. And the educator can hardly succeed unless he is also a philosopher and has gained deep-rooted and profound convictions concerning the qualities which make the best or "most perfect" individuals, and how they may be obtained.

From what has been said so far, and from the practical disclosures of Dr. Hartmann's research, it seems evident that the best individuals are those who are able to think for themselves, and are not afraid to do it. To the educator, this must mean that he has the responsibility of training the young in self-reliance. His problem, then, is a most delicate one. He has to show the growing child that blind or fearful reliance on the opinions of others may lead to disastrous consequences; and, at the same time, he has to guard against suggestions or influences which will lead to a rupture of the natural bonds of confidence and trust which unite parent and child and teacher and child. Always, it is the *child* who must learn to distinguish between intelligent acceptance of guidance and unintelligent submission to suggestion from others. How separate prejudice from good advice? How beware of arrogance and conceit without losing self-confidence and the sense of one's ability and right to make his own important moral decisions?

A teacher can easily overload a child with responsibility, or set the child problems which are far beyond his ability to solve. Or a teacher can simply "lay down the law," asking only conformity, and disliking self-reliance as evidence of "stubborn" independence. Further, the inner capacities for self-reliance and responsibility vary greatly from child to child. The teacher, manifestly, cannot "know" everything, and he has to rely upon some inward sense of fitness as much as anything, and to learn to manage his relationships with children in a way that invites responsibility without ever forcing it. The enforcing of responsibility is really a secondary technique which belongs in the reform school, and should have only a minimum presence in the company of most children, in the form of mild group pressures and the "conditioning" effects of games and other childhood activities.

We have not, it is true, done much to "explain" the difference between creative and imitative minds. Perhaps we should say, finally, that, so far as we can see, these are qualities or degrees of soul-evolution, possible of explanation only on some hypothesis of egoic pre-existence, such as the Pythagoreans of antiquity, the Platonists, or the Gnostics believed in. This hypothesis, at any rate, adds to rather than diminishes the dignity of man.

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